



**Paul Kinsinger**  
*Managing Consultant*

Professor Paul Kinsinger heads the Thunderbird Learning Consulting Network's Global Business and Competitive Intelligence practice. A 30-year intelligence professional, he has taught more than 2,000 T-bird MBA's about the value of competitive intelligence, done over 150 BI/CI projects with companies ranging from Fortune 50's to small start-ups, and provided workshops for companies seeking to arm their employees to be intelligence collectors and for working CI professionals seeking to upgrade their skills sets.

**Thunderbird Learning Consulting Network**  
152489 N59<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Glendale, AZ 85306

Office: (602) 978-7611  
Fax: (602) 439-4851  
E-mail: kinsingp@t-bird.edu

*We're on the Web!*  
<http://www.thunderbird.edu/tlcn>

## The Global Business and Competitive Intelligence Corner: BI/CI--Putting the "Aim" back into "Ready, Aim, Fire!"

Growing up watching adventure films, I soon had visions of riding steeds, crossing swords, and firing arrows at the villains, just like my on-screen heroes. I didn't have a horse or a fencing master, so I took up archery with visions of one day splitting an arrow in half, just like Robin Hood.

Except that I just couldn't hit the target that often. Try as I might, my arrows just flew wide or hit the target's edge. Disappointed, I eventually gave up archery...no Robin Hood would stalk my backyard.

What was the problem? Well, simply put, at such a young age I just could not master the essentials of "ready, aim, fire"—the key sequence of aligning muscle control and eyesight in a precision use of energy for maximum advantage.



### Intelligence and business strategy

How does this relate to intelligence and business?

Well, successful strategy is a lot like the "ready, aim, fire" sequence. It starts with "ready"—determining goals and crafting a vision. Then comes "aim"—understanding the external environmental challenges to successful execution and marshalling the resources necessary to overcome them. Finally, "fire"—leveraging the resources and effort effectively to achieve success.

While some companies do this well, many don't. How many times have you heard someone in your company say, "well, it was ready, fire, aim again," when describing the latest example of poor strategy execution? I've heard this time and again. Often, the phrase is uttered deliberately out of sequence, as if to underscore frustration with "why can't we just do things right?" Sometimes, I see companies engage in what I would call, "fire, fire, fire"—the rapid execution of strategies that had no "aim" sequencing at all, in the hope that they'll hit something out there. Is this an effective use of resources?

Think about this. Can your company or business unit afford strategies that fail to hit the target because no one aimed? Does your company or business unit have enough resources to "fire, fire, fire" in the hope of hitting something? My guess is that the answer is "no."

### The Discipline of "Aim"

Business and competitive intelligence is, quite simply, the discipline of "aim," the part of the sequence where you align your strategy and resources as appropriately as possible to the external environment



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challenges that you cannot control. Put another way, it's about illuminating the playing field. Would you want to know as much as you could about the other players competing with you? Would you want to know how they're arrayed against the opportunities and challenges that you also face, how they see the playing field from their vantage point, how they see you as a real or potential competitor and how they plan to "defense" your playbook?

Would you like to understand the rules and referees that could constrain your strategies? How about a detailed assessment of industry trends to test your assumptions? What about greater insights into the strategies of the technology or distribution partners you're counting on?

And, how about getting all this and more in a "high thread count" data- and insight-driven assessment that goes way beyond the "back of the envelope" anecdotes and rumors that too often pass for external "intelligence" in many companies?

Well, if all this sounds like an appealing solution to your strategy hiccups, then you need business and competitive intelligence working on your side.

Written By:  
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